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ABSTRACT

A language laboratory component became an integral part of the ESL (English as a second language) program at Sacramento City College when student enrollment increased and a freeze on hiring new teachers went into effect. While the number of class hours of each ESL course was reduced, an hour or two per week of laboratory work was added. The term "lab work" refers to the following activities: listening to cassette tapes (listening comprehension, grammar drills, dictations, etc.), completing written exercises, writing compositions, doing homework assignments, or working individually with a tutor. The students attend the lab, which is open daily from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., on a drop-in basis. The entire lab operation, including placement testing and training and supervision of tutors, is under the direction of an instructional assistant. The appendices contain the schedule of the former and current ESL programs and an annotated bibliography of the ESL materials, including texts and tapes, used in the program. (Author/CFM)

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THE ESL LAB AS TUTORIAL AND LEARNING CENTER

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I

In fall, 1977, we at Sacramento City College began requiring all students enrolled in English-as-a-second-language classes to spend an hour or two a week in the lab. Before that, lab work had not been an integral part of our program. But we were having some problems and finally hit upon the lab idea as a partial solution to them. Like many colleges, we were experiencing a leveling-off in enrollment, and as a result, a district-wide freeze on hiring new teachers, at least in English and Foreign Languages. At the same time, our ESL program had been growing steadily since its inception in 1970. By 1975 we had three instructors teaching ESL full-time, and one or two English or FL instructors willing to pick up an extra course now and then if their schedules permitted. But with the freeze on hiring we couldn't add any new instructors, and we were unable to persuade anyone else to switch full-time to ESL. How could we keep growing when we had a limited number of instructors teaching a fixed number of courses each semester?

Most of our courses at that time met for five hours a week because we believed rather strongly that, in learning a foreign language, daily contact with the language is important. Thus a normal instructional load for an ESL instructor was three 5-hour classes a week, while other English teachers normally carry a load of five 3-hour classes. The only way we could see to add more ESL classes was to reduce the number of weekly meetings from five to three, making ESL classes fit the same scheduling pattern as regular English classes. We were also able to add some extra courses at

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the same time. (See Appendix for a brief description of the two programs.) However, we now had a potential problem: How could we reconcile these changes with our belief in daily contact with the language?

Our solution was to add the lab component. Students would attend each ESL class three times a week instead of five, but depending on the class, they would spend another hour or two each week working in the lab. Thus for most classes they would still be getting five hours a week of instruction, but of course some of that instruction would not be face-to-face with an instructor. However, while this reduction in class time might at first seem a disadvantage of the new program, it is not necessarily so. In the average class of 25 or more students, how many times an hour does an individual student become actively involved with the language? Yet in the lab, the student would be spending his/her two hours a week engaged in a variety of activities requiring him/her to take on an active, rather than passive, role. As we thought through the idea, our initial misgivings began to give way to the belief that, if properly structured, the new lab might actually be making a positive contribution to the student's language education.

Of course, our concept of the lab was all important. If students were going to be spending so much time in the lab, what they did there would make a great deal of difference to the success or failure of the new program. The last thing we thought about was hardware. In fact, when we first got started, all we had in the way of equipment was a handful of cheap cassette recorders and some headphones for each set. We all had visions, which we rejected, of what a language lab was supposed to be like: a whole class of students, each wired to his/her own machine, working on the same lesson while the instructor sits at the console, eavesdropping, noting errors,

making corrections, waking up the students when they fall asleep. We didn't want our lab to be like that. As a result, we don't have a console or a traditional lab set-up. We were lucky and got an unexpected windfall, and we now have twenty-four individual carrels with a sophisticated double-track tape deck in each to replace the six cheap cassettes, but the basic concept remains the same. The main thing about our lab is not the hardware but the materials we use, and of course the tutors who help create a relaxed, personalized atmosphere where learning can take place.

What about materials? This was the big question for us when we first conceived the idea for the lab. Considering the size of our program and our individual teaching loads, we thought it would be unrealistic to try to make our own materials, at least on a grand scale. Fortunately, however, a great many commercial materials have become available in the last few years which are either specifically designed for or can be easily converted to, an individualized format. (By "individualized" we mean anything that can be worked on by the student alone, at his/her own pace, without the necessity of formal teacher instruction.) It is beyond the scope of this article to go into a detailed account of each tape or text or workbook that we use in the lab. However, we have included in the appendix an annotated bibliography of some of the materials that we have found to be most valuable.

II

The ESL Lab at SCC is located in an area which is about the size of a large classroom. It is separated into two distinct areas: There is a study area with approximately 30 desks, and there is an area containing 24 carrels equipped with cassette tape recorders and headphones. The principle equipment used in the lab includes the cassette tape recorders and headphones,

multiple copies of cassette tapes used in each ESL class, reference books, desk copies of the classroom texts, and a fast tape duplicator.

The services provided in the lab are in support of the ESL classes. Students taking ESL classes are required to spend 1-2 hours per week in the lab for each ESL class in which they are enrolled. Activities pursued by the students in the lab include listening to various types of cassette tapes, completing written exercises (such as grammar exercises or working in a series of books designed to improve the students' reading skills), writing compositions, working on homework assignments, or working individually with a tutor on any of the above or other class-related activities. Among the types of tapes available for student use are dictations, grammar drills, listening comprehension exercises, tapes for vocabulary development, and a series of tapes on the mechanics of writing. There are also a few tapes which provide pronunciation practice. Another principal service offered in the ESL lab is diagnostic testing, mainly at the beginning of each semester but also administered by appointment throughout the school year.

Students attend the lab on a drop-in basis, and the lab is open daily from 8-3. Briefly, the procedures followed by a student wishing to use the lab are as follows: The student enters the lab area where he is required to sign his name and the time in the ESL sign-in book. The statistics accumulated from the book generate ADA (Average Daily Attendance, from which state funding is derived) for the lab. The student then proceeds to the ESL lab where he obtains his folder which contains his activity sheet, on which is recorded both the student's lab attendance and the activities completed in the lab. The student has a separate folder for each ESL class he is taking. Once the student has obtained his folder, a

tutor provides him with the appropriate materials and helps him get started on the work, when necessary.

Tutors are absolutely essential for the operation of the kind of ESL lab we have. At present the tutors do not work on a one-to-one basis with the students, although the number of tutors scheduled per hour depends roughly on the anticipated number of students using the lab. We have found that four tutors can assist approximately 20-30 students per hour if some of the students are working on written materials, and others are listening to cassette tapes. There are two categories of tutors: those who work for money and those who work for academic units. At present, most of the paid tutors are funded through EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, a state-funded program offering support services to educationally handicapped students) since many of the students tutored in the lab are EOPS students. Others qualify for work-study funds. Tutors working in the lab are students at SCC who are recommended by faculty, generally English or foreign language instructors. These tutors have had no training in ESL methods or methodology. However, they must be native or near-native speakers of English; have a grasp of standard English usage; have an interest in people and a desire to help others learn; and have some foreign language learning experience and/or experience living in a foreign culture.

Tutors receive on-the-job training on an on-going basis. Next fall there will be a tutor training course which will cover the principles of tutoring, although the specific principles for tutoring ESL will continue to be taught in the ESL lab. Since the tutors have had no prior ESL training, they are provided with some background information on the elements of English and ESL. In order to function well in the lab, they must first become familiar with all of the materials used in the lab, and they need to learn which materials are used at which levels. The tutors also have

to be instructed on how the students are to use the materials in the lab so that they will be able to help the students use the materials to their maximum advantage. In addition, the tutors have to become familiar with the lab operating procedures, including such things as checking materials in and out. When training the tutors, two points are stressed: The tutors are to make themselves available to the students, and the tutors are there to assist the students, but they should not do the work for them.

There are two types of functions student tutors are able to perform in the lab. After they become familiar with the lab set-up, they are able to perform the basic operational procedures necessary to keep the lab running smoothly. On the basis of their native speaker intuition, the tutors are also able to assist the students on certain elements of English. For example, they can correct simple grammar exercises as well as controlled compositions. They can explain vocabulary items and give the students further examples of how these items are used. They can assist the students in understanding reading passages, and, finally, they can help the students improve their conversation skills, and to a limited extent, their pronunciation.

However, there are some limitations to the role that student tutors can perform in the ESL lab. For one thing, they are unable to provide anything other than basic (simple) grammatical explanations since they have had no background in ESL. They aren't aware of the problems encountered by students in learning English as a second language, and they have never studied English grammar from the viewpoint of how to teach it to someone who is learning ESL. Since they are sometimes unable to provide grammatical explanations, this means there are some limitations to the types of exercises they can correct or assist students in completing. Also, initially, they cannot help the students correct their compositions since

before receiving specific training in this skill, the tutors do not know how to make the correcting process a learning experience. The initial tendency is to write the composition for the student rather than assist him in writing it. Finally, some student tutors can't help students with paragraph or composition organization since they themselves only have a vague notion of the concepts involved in composition writing.

Some of the more important resources and equipment that are required for setting up a lab component for an ESL program are mentioned below. In terms of personnel, there must be a supervisor who would be responsible for organizing the lab and materials; hiring, training and supervising the tutors; establishing operating procedures; maintaining a lab and tutor budget; and, finally, procuring new materials for the lab as need arises. Obviously, tutors are also required. Essential equipment includes: cassette recorders and headphones, a supply of blank tapes, a fast tape duplicator for making additional copies and replacing broken or worn-out tapes, and a variety of instructional materials in support of, and supplemental to, classroom activities. Finally, to maintain the lab in top operating condition, a good liaison with the AV department on campus is also essential.

At the time of this writing, the ESL lab at SCC has been in operation for only eight months, and we are still trying to work out some of the kinks. The search for good materials--whether we buy them or try to make some of our own--is a never-ending process. We would also like to be able to hire more tutors in the future, so that students could get more individual attention and help when they need it. With more staff, we could also do more in the way of individualization: we could give diagnostic tests for specific skills, in reading for example, and construct individual learning

packages for each student. Basically, though, a solid groundwork has been laid, and we're satisfied with what we've achieved so far.

APPENDIX I

Former ESL Program (1975)

Level	MTELP	Course	Units	Hours	Title
I Low	50-69	ESL 1	4	5	Basic Structure & Pronunciation
Intermediate		ESL 2	4	5	Basic Reading and Writing
II High	70-79	ESL 3	4	5	Intermediate Structure
Intermediate		ESL 4	4	5	Intermediate Reading & Writing
III	80+	ESL 5	3	4	Advanced Composition
Advanced		ESL 6	3	3	Advanced Reading & Composition

Current ESL Program (1977-78)

Level	MTELP	Course	Units	Hours	Title
I	50-69	ESL 1	3	3 lec 2 lab	Basic Grammar and Composition
Low		ESL 2	3	3 lec 2 lab	Basic Reading and Vocabulary
Intermediate		ESL 11	3	3 lec 2 lab	Basic Listening Comprehension
II	70-79	ESL 3	3	3 lec 2 lab	Intermediate Grammar & Composition
High		ESL 4	3	3 lec 2 lab	Intermediate Reading & Vocabulary
Intermediate		ESL 12	3	3 lec 2 lab	Intermediate Listening Comprehension
III	80+	ESL 5	3	3 lec 1 lab	Advanced Composition
Advanced		ESL 6	3	3	Advanced Reading & Composition

APPENDIX II

Annotated Bibliography of ESL Lab Materials

The following list does not pretend to be exhaustive; rather, it surveys some of the texts and materials that we are currently using, or plan shortly to use, in our lab at Sacramento City College, and that we think are especially valuable.

Grammar

There are many grammar texts for which tapes and workbooks are available. Most of these tapes feature substitution and transformation drills of the mechanical type because other more meaningful types of drills do not easily lend themselves to a format where uniform answers can be given. We are currently using University of Michigan materials. In class, students are introduced to a grammatical pattern, followed by a brief, rapid practice; they are then referred to the lab for more intensive practice with tapes and workbooks.

Krohn, Robert. English Sentence Structure. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971. Although most of the drills are mechanical and lack context, this old standby presents a fairly complete basic grammar of English in a clear format and has the advantage of affording the student a maximum amount of (largely oral) practice. Almost all the drills are recorded on a set of thirty tapes, available from the English Language Institute.

King, H.V. English Sentence Structure Review. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977. This workbook provides written exercises to complete the oral work in Krohn. Although no answer key is provided, one can easily be made.

Morley, Joan. Listening Dictation. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976. Keyed to Krohn, this book uses dictation and listening comprehension exercises to develop a correspondence between spoken and written language. All of the lessons are on tapes available from the English Language Institute, and an answer key can be found in the back of each workbook, making it possible for students to check their own work.

A new series of books (which we haven't tried yet but plan to use next semester) seems ideally suited for the laboratory situation.

Pack, Alice C. Dyad Learning Program: Preposition.
Dyad Learning Program: Pronouns and Determiners.
Dyad Learning Program: Verb Choices and Verb Forms.
Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1977. In this program, students work in pairs (dyads) taking turns being either student (i.e. learner) or tutor. The tutor's half of the book contains the answers to the exercises in the student's half. The obvious advantage to such a program is that the "tutor" is also a student, and is learning at the same time as the tutee. The titles in the series makes it plain that some of the major problem areas in English grammar are set aside for intensive work.

Writing

The kind of writing that can best be done in a lab setting, where student (i.e. nonprofessional) tutors read and correct what the student has written, is controlled writing. Of course if your tutors are upper division or graduate students, you can attempt more complicated writing projects. Controlled writing, as the term is used here, requires the student to copy a passage making limited and specific grammatical or lexical changes (e.g. changing all the verbs from present to past tense, or the pronouns from he to she). All errors--including spelling, capitalization, and punctuation--are marked, so students learn to become good proofreaders. One big advantage of a controlled writing assignment is that a tutor can read and correct it, while the student watches, in about a minute or two. But of course the more creative problems of composition--how to decide what you're going to say, how to organize it, how to say it effectively--are largely ignored.

Gallingane, Gloria, and Donald Byrd. Write Away: Book One. New York: Collier Macmillan International, 1977. This is the first published volume of an intended three-volume series which has just come on the market and looks promising. Exercises are of two types: (1) rewriting (making grammatical or lexical changes) and (2) sentence combining. The book is indexed for the teacher, showing the kind of change made in each lesson, and has an answer key so that students can check their own work.

Kunz, Linda Ann, and Robert R. Viscount. Write Me a Ream: A Course in Controlled Composition for Job Training and Adult Education. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1973. A step-by-step approach to controlled composition, where a student must demonstrate mastery of a given step before going on to the next. The teacher's Handbook that accompanies the text gives a detailed and lucid account of the advantages to be gained from controlled writing, as well as outlining suggested procedures for using the text in class or lab. The Handbook also explains what grammatical or lexical point is being covered in a given passage, as a handy reference for the teacher.

As for mechanics, mainly capitalization and punctuation, a complete short course (30 lessons of 5-10 minutes each) can be found in the following:

Jaramillo, Barbara L. Conventions in the Mechanics of Writing: A Language Laboratory Manual for Foreign Students. Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburg, 1973. The course consists of a work book and accompanying tapes. The students listen to a tape, fill in their answers in the workbook, then check the answers in the answer key at the back. There are also periodic review lessons which can be used as models for tests.

One text which introduces students at a fairly basic level to the concept of expository writing while still holding as much as possible to a controlled format and a simple (though adult) vocabulary is the following:

Horn, Vivian, and Esther Rosman. Composition Steps. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1977. While not intended originally for the laboratory, this text has a great many exercises which can be taped or adapted for lab use. These are for the most part highly controlled (and thus quickly corrected), but they also exhibit variety and imagination. The publishers have been generous in giving permission to tape portions of the book.

Reading and Vocabulary Development

A lot of the so-called readers on the market do not do very much to teach reading, although they may provide good topics for class discussion. In the last few years, however, a couple of titles have appeared that actually attempt to teach reading skills, and because they have answer keys, they car easily be used in the lab.

Baudoin, E. Margaret, Ellen S. Bober, Mark A. Clarke, Barbara K. Dobson, and Sandra Silberstein. Reader's Choice: A Reading Skills Textbook for Students of English as a Second Language. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977. By far the best on the market, not only does this text actually contain exercises designed to develop essential reading skills, but the reading selections themselves are varied and stimulating. The answer key at the back contains a warning that the process leading to an answer is as important as the answer itself.

Hirasawa, Louise, and Linda Markstein. Developing Reading Skills: Advanced (1974) and Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced (1977). Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers. Both these texts are by the same authors and have the same format, so they are included together. Not only do they contain exercises that help students read more closely and make inferences about what they read, but they also contain a great deal of work on vocabulary building and such recurring grammatical problems as prepositions and articles. There are also some writing exercises and suggestions for discussion on composition.

The following text is not strictly speaking a reader--in fact, the preface makes clear that the purpose of the readings is to present material for coordinated vocabulary and structural practice. Still, since each lesson is preceded by a reading, and since vocabulary-building is one of its announced aims, we are planning to use it and include it here:

Draper, George, and Edgar Sather. It's All in a Day's Work. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1977. The book and accompanying tapes present eight readings in which people engaged in various occupations talk about their work. The readings then form the basis of a variety of exercises which follow. The readings and many of the exercises are on tape and can be done in the lab, and there is an answer key in the back of the book.

As for idioms, both of the following can be adapted for lab use:

Reeves, George: Idioms in Action: A Key to Fluency in English. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1975. This workbook has good conceptualized exercises ranging from manipulative to communicative in which 150 high-frequency idioms are presented and practiced. The publisher kindly gave permission to put many of the exercises on tape. Students first do the exercises in the workbook, then listen to the tape for the answers.

McCallum, George P. Idiom Drills. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970. Although the drills are substitution type and rather wooden, 180 idioms are introduced in the context of a dialogue and later used again in a reading. Many students find the text useful, and the publishers gave permission to put the drills on tape.

Listening Comprehension

There are only two currently available texts which are specifically designed to teach listening comprehension, and we have found them both ideally suited to the lab.

Morley, Joan. Improving Aural Comprehension. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972. This is a thorough course in listening comprehension, consisting of a student's workbook and a detailed teacher's manual. All the lessons are available on tape, including test lessons at the end of each unit, and the teacher's manual contains all the answers. We do some of the lessons in class and assign some for the lab, but there is no reason why the whole course couldn't be done in the lab at the student's own pace, and it is easy to make extra tests modeled on those in the text.

Plaister, Ted. Developing Listening Comprehension for ESL Students: The Kingdom of Kochen. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976. This text features a series of twenty short university-type lectures about a nonexistent kingdom in Southeast Asia. Students listen to the identical lecture three times using a series of "auding prompts" which help them focus on main ideas. Then the lecture is paraphrased twice for practice in note-taking. All the lectures are on tape, as well as a list of key spelling words for each lesson. The materials can be used entirely in the lab, or students can do the spelling and listen to the auding prompts in the lab and come to class for the paraphrased lectures. The quizzes at the end of each lesson have answer keys.

We also use dictations to develop listening skills and an awareness of the correspondence between speech and writing:

Morley, Joan. Listening Dictation. (See note under Grammar)

U.C. Berkeley. Dictations I, II, and III. Berkeley: Language Laboratory, University of California, No Date. This is a series of 65 dictations available for the cost of the tapes. Transcripts are also available. Each dictation is read three times, once at normal speed, once at slow speed broken down into phrase groups so that students can write, and once again at normal speed so that they can check their work.